

Pentagon Outlines Missile Defense Program

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 17, 2002—Despite a few misfires and a ground-based booster system that's back on the drawing board, the head of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency says he is confident the system "will work."

It has to.

The United States currently has no overall proven defense capability against an enemy ballistic missile attack. In light of threats by hostile states and terrorist groups, however, President Bush directed the Pentagon today to begin fielding initial defense capabilities by the year 2004. He cited the need "to protect U.S. national security and the security of its allies and friendly countries."

A special commission in 2001 assessing the ballistic missile threat to the United States listed China, India, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Iraq, and Iran as countries that have or have been working to develop ballistic missiles.

At a briefing today, Air Force Lt. Gen. Ronald Kadish said he is confident the United States is ready to proceed with initial testing of what is called "hit-to-kill" capability. Kadish is the Director of the Missile Defense Agency, the organization responsible for research, development, and testing of all the components of the program.

"What we do know is that our fundamental technology of hit-to-kill works. A few years ago, I could not tell you that with confidence," Kadish said.

"The system testing that we have done gives us the confidence that we have the ability to integrate these elements, as complex as they are, and to make them effective," he said. "Our computer predictions... are telling us when we do have a successful test, it occurs just as we predicted."

Kadish has good reason to be confident—and videotape to back the Missile Defense Agency test results. During tests in 2001 and 2002, the agency was able to destroy four of five missiles in long-range, ground-based intercepts, two of four using the Army's Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missile system, and three of three short- to medium-range missiles using ship-based intercepts.

"Some things will work and some things won't, but we will build confidence over time as we invest in this program," he said. That investment is expected to cost about \$8 billion a year, and Kadish said he will ask Congress to appropriate another \$1.5 billion over the next two years for certain development capabilities. These include:

- Up to 20 ground-based interceptor missiles capable of taking out ICBMs [Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles] during mid-flight—16 at Fort Greeley, Alaska, and four at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.
- Up to 20 sea-based interceptor missiles employed on existing Aegis destroyers.
- Deployment of air-transportable Patriot PAC-3s to intercept short- and medium-range ballistic missiles.
- Land-, sea- and space-based sensors.
- Upgrades to existing early-warning satellites and radars in the United Kingdom and Greenland.
- Development of a sea-based X-band radar and upgrades to sensors currently on Aegis cruisers and destroyers.

Kadish described the missile defense program as aggressive and ongoing. He said that results of recent testing and analysis have given his agency the confidence to move forward.

Editor's Note: This information is in the public domain at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news>.